

Is Tim LaHaye The Anti-Christ?

by Mark Burdman

Desecration: Antichrist Takes the Throne

by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins
Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001
407 pages, hardbound, \$24.99

The Remnant: On the Brink of Armageddon

by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins
Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002
405 pages, hardbound, \$24.99

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terror atrocities, in the midst of the worst economic-financial crisis to hit Western civilization in centuries, and as new wars are being prepared by the imperial-utopian elements in the Anglo-American realm and their cohorts in Israel, it is a particularly dangerous phenomenon, that a book series exulting about a coming Armageddon and the slaughter of billions of human beings has been at the top of bestseller lists in the United States. Such books are the cultural-psychological equivalent of a deadly virus being unleashed against the American population.

The Tim LaHaye-Jerry B. Jenkins series of “Left Behind” novels are such a “virus.” *Desecration* and *The Remnant* are the latest, the ninth and tenth, in this series. The eighth, *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World*, became, during 1998, the number-one bestseller at Amazon.com, selling most aggressively in the Southern, “Bible Belt” states, led by Texas and Georgia.

Following Sept. 11, things have gotten worse. By March-April 2002, *Desecration: Antichrist Takes the Throne*, released on Oct. 30, 2001, had sold nearly 3 million copies, and, it is to be assumed, *The Remnant*, released in June 2002, will also make a giant profit for the two wacko authors and their publisher. Its initial print run is 2.75 million copies.

Tim LaHaye is reportedly the highest-paid author in the world (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 27). His writings, including those with Jenkins as co-author or ghostwriter, have been translated into many languages. LaHaye’s publisher claims that 50 million “Left Behind” books, including children’s and comic-book editions, have been sold since the series began, seven years ago. There is now an industry of “Left Behind” products, including CDs of “dramatic broadcast performances”; audio editions; “Left Behind” calendars; “religious” objects; and more.

Tim LaHaye is also very well-connected into the American Christian fundamentalist movement (also known as “Christian right” or “Christian Zionist”). This network numbers in the tens of millions, and has its claws in various elements of the Bush Administration, including part of the mind of “Dubya” himself.

LaHaye and his wife Beverly are leading members of the “Calvary Council” of the Religious Roundtable, which has been blackmailing the White House to support Ariel Sharon or lose the 2002 elections. The Roundtable says that it “promotes a strong military and strong law enforcement and opposes abortion, pornography and divorce. The group is also an opponent of the Equal Rights Amendment and rights for gay people and is antcommunist and anti-Soviet. The group is strongly pro-Israel . . . and a clearinghouse” for right-wing groups.

LaHaye is also active in that brand of right-wing politics



Between them, these two varieties of magical belief in “little green men under the floorboards” fixing the outcome of the world, are dominating American popular book sales. Tim Lahaye’s super-popular “Left Behind” series of Armageddon books are written as close to Spiderman comic style as possible.

that intersects murky intelligence operations. He worked for years, as a paid official of the Sun Myung Moon organization. In the 1960s, LaHaye co-founded, with spook-ideologue Paul Weyrich—a nominal “conservative Catholic”—the Council on National Policy (CNP). This secretive organization played a covert role in the 1990s operations against President Bill Clinton.

‘Iraq = Babylon’

The Swedish daily *Svenska Dagbladet*, on Sept. 9, ran a feature on the “Left Behind” series, trying to explain what it called the “bizarre ideology” contained therein, to a Swedish audience. Author Eva Johansson usefully pointed out, that this ideology is “fully normal” for many major figures in the Republican Party, is part of the “right-wing Christian standpoint” that has influence inside the White House, and has relevance to certain aspects of American policies. Most notably, she stressed that the “Left Behind” series is germane to “the plans to invade Iraq,” especially as the books are a crude, literal interpretation of the New Testament’s Book of Revelation, in which the Anti-Christ “is steering his empire from Babylon”—i.e., Iraq today. In the LaHaye-Jenkins novels, the “Antichrist” has his headquarters in “New Babylon.”

Indeed, at a July 10 press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, to hype the release of *The Remnant*, LaHaye ranted against “rogue nations” with “access to weapons of mass destruction,” clearly a plug for war against Iraq. He told the Washington audience that “God has chosen to use this tool”—his books. In other locations, LaHaye has claimed that one of the signs now rampant, of the activity of the “Antichrist,” are the “manifestations of Allah.” This is the “religious” contribution to the Clash of Civilizations design of Harvard’s Samuel P. Huntington, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and the wide assortment of neo-conservative nuts running loose

in Washington. That the Christian fundies have extensive ties with the Sharon-Netanyahu Likud party fascists in Israel, makes the dynamic more dangerous.

‘Imagine the Turmoil, the Devastation’

LaHaye and Jenkins (a former speechwriter for the late televangelist Billy Graham) appeal to the crudest Manichean (“good guys vs. bad guys”) strain in the American ideology: God and His followers on the one side, and “Antichrist” and his legions on the other. In this unfolding Armageddon, the death of billions of human beings is welcomed, as a necessary part of the divine design for bringing the world to an end as soon as possible. When the war fever against Iraq and Islam is being whipped up, this is a true devil’s brew.

As *Svenska Dagbladet*’s Johansson pointed out, the basic fraud—common fare among American “fundies”—is, that the Book of Revelation must be taken as the literal foretelling of historical events. This confounds the true nature of Christianity, the standard of which is natural law and the search for truth, as exemplified by the magnificent Chapter 13 of St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians; reading such a New Testament passage, is the best antidote for the pagan, anti-Christian eccentricity promoted by LaHaye and Jenkins. The Book of Revelation was never meant to be prophecy, and certainly not a foretelling of future history. It was, rather, in the mode of an apocalyptic vision, an elaboration of the quality of the Roman Empire as a doomed civilization.

Flowing from that literalist fraud, the warped LaHaye-Jenkins “theology” maintains that everything is effectively predetermined; there is no free will, just a limited field for action in a game already rigged. Theirs is a perverted notion of “grace,” in which, by a mystical act of faith, an “elect” can be saved. Outside of this elect, the rest die. The “God” of the “Left Behind” series, while repeatedly praised by his follow-

ers in the novels as a “God of mercy,” is a cruel monster, a genocidal beast, something out of the worst sermons of the American fundamentalists’ 18th-Century idol Jonathan Edwards. As the novels progress, God combats the Anti-Christ by such actions as turning the world’s seas into blood, unleashing unbearable heat upon the Earth, turning everything into utter darkness, all of which lead to deaths of billions of human beings.

But since all this supposedly fulfills the passages of Revelation, and brings on the coming “Kingdom of Heaven,” this makes his followers happy! By the end of *The Remnant*, the prophet for the “good guys,” Tsion ben-Judah, states: “The world is a spent cartridge. . . . Poverty is rampant. Law and order are relics. . . . Imagine the turmoil, the devastation. Power shortages, air conditioning overloads, breakdowns. And all this coming with half the population already gone. We are not far from anarchy. . . . God is just and God is holy, . . . but I do not believe he would send any more judgments on the world now if he weren’t still jealous that some repent.”

These books’ puerile style is a cross between a Spiderman comic-book and the script for a computer game. This is laughable, but also, literally, diabolical, in two senses. First, it contributes to the dumbing-down of Americans’ thinking, reducing things to simple and silly fantasies. And it trivializes the kinds of genocidal slaughter described, as if only part of a game. Co-author Jenkins is otherwise a writer of baseball stars’ biographies; the “Left Behind” seems almost to refer to failing to get out of third grade. Typical of the elegant prose, is the description of how Hattie Durham, a “good guy,” reacted, when visited by the Archangel Michael: “Hattie sat panting.” But my favorite gem is the comment by hero Buck Williams to his wife Chloe: “Be serious. We all need R and R before Armageddon.”

‘Bloodiest Season in the History of the World’

As to where the words “Left Behind” come from, and how the story line unfolds, we now give a brief account.

Desecration and *The Remnant* take place in the second half of the seven years of the “Great Tribulation,” described as “the bloodiest season in the history of the world.” By the conclusion of *The Remnant*, we are near the end of these seven years, at the end of which will come “The Glorious Appearing,” the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. One assumes that all this will be described in a coming volume, if the world hasn’t ended by then.

The “Left Behind” series began after the big shock had already hit the world: “The Rapture,” accompanied by all sorts of chaos and confusion, when “in one cataclysmic moment, millions around the world disappear.” These “disappeared” were sucked up to Heaven, to be reunited with their family members among the good guys, when the “Kingdom of Heaven” arrives.

In the seven years of the Tribulation, there is a cosmic battle between the “believers” and the Anti-Christ, who is a bizarre figure named Nicolae Carpathia. He became the Anti-

Christ after having been killed—during his incarnation as potentate of the “Global Community” (he had previously been President of Romania and Secretary General of the United Nations)—and then having miraculously risen from the dead. He now heads a religion called “Carpathianism,” whose followers are branded with a “loyalty mark” on their right hands or foreheads, and “vaccinated” with a biochip with personal information (this detail was omitted somehow from Revelation). If they refuse, they are executed by the guillotine. The depiction of the infinitely cruel Nicolae Carpathia most often reads like a cross between a gangster in a Grade-D Hollywood movie, and the super-evil “bad guys” in Spiderman or Batman comic books.

The heroes are led by the “Tribulation Force,” based, for some reason, out of Chicago, a city that had earlier been almost totally destroyed in war. Since the Tribulation Force had not disappeared during the Rapture, are still alive on Earth and not—yet—in Heaven, they are those “left behind.”

The Tribulation Force has the disadvantage of having to operate underground, to avoid the “Global Community Peacekeepers” of the Anti-Christ Carpathia. But they have two advantages. The first, another glaring omission from Revelation, is that they have vast Internet and computer capabilities. The Force’s spiritual leader and teacher, Tsion ben-Judah, manages to communicate with no fewer than 1 billion people a day through the Internet—apparently, while millions of others are dropping dead like flies. The other “weapons” they have are the Archangel Michael, who manages to intervene whenever the going gets really rough, and God Himself, Who sets the rules. In the end, everything is preordained and predetermined, the game is rigged, the good guys win.

‘Completed Jews’

We spare our readers further details, only to point to one interesting “catch” in the whole story, which is implied in the central roles of two of the heroes, Dr. Chaim Rosenzweig and Tsion ben-Judah. Both are Israeli Jews, by origin. Rosenzweig had been a Nobel Prize-winning Israeli botanist, before he killed Carpathia; while ben-Judah had been a rabbinical scholar and Israeli statesman. But, in the novels, they are the strongest devotees of Christ the Messiah, and their central mission is to bring Israeli Jews into Christianity. Ben-Judah had revealed his belief in the Messiah on international TV, and now propagates the idea that the Jews have a chance to reverse their “mistake,” in not having recognized Jesus as the Messiah, originally.

The main drama in the novels is the process of mass conversion of Israeli Jews. So, in the end, there will be no more Jews. Jews are the heroes of the book, as long as they become what American fundies like to call “completed Jews.” This desired fate for the mass conversion of Jews, is at the core of the Christian fundie/Christian Zionist belief-structure. Doesn’t this make Israeli fanatics like former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who have spent so much time and energy building ties to the fundies, all the more insane?